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# **Investigating Family Adaptation to Army Life: Exploratory Site Visit Findings**

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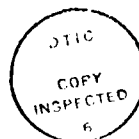
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# INVESTIGATING FAMILY ADAPTATION TO ARMY LIFE: EXPLORATORY SITE VISIT FINDINGS

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**INVESTIGATING FAMILY ADAPTATION TO ARMY LIFE:  
EXPLORATORY SITE VISIT FINDINGS**

The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) is a five year research project being conducted to determine the effects of family factors on retention and readiness. The AFRP is focusing on four areas of investigation: Family Adaptation, Retention, Readiness, and Spouse Employment. This investigation was part of the Family Adaptation research effort.

As part of the developmental research activities carried out during the first year of the AFRP, family adaptation researchers conducted exploratory site visits at three Army installations. The purpose of these visits was to obtain multiple Army and family perspectives on the Army family experience, the factors that define and affect family adaptation to the Army, and the interactive effects between the Army and its families. The key exploratory questions were:

- How do families view the advantages and disadvantages of Army life?
- What types of families adapt best to Army life? How do families cope with the demands of Army life?
- What are the effects of Army policies, programs, and practices on families?
- What effects do families have on commands, on retention, and on mission performance?

This investigation used several methods to obtain qualitative and quantitative information on these questions.

Focus group interviews were held with soldiers and spouses and with Army leaders. Individual interviews were held with service providers. In addition, a subset of the soldiers and spouses also completed a coping resource checklist.

Information obtained during these visits was used to enhance the researchers' understanding of Army family life and to formulate specific plans for future research to be conducted as part of the Army Family Research Program. It was also used in the development of measures for aspects of family adaptation.

Each of the three following sections in this paper (Method, Results, and Discussion) is presented in two parts. The focus groups and interviews are addressed first in each section, followed by the resource checklist exploratory study.

#### Method: Focus Groups and Interviews

##### Subjects

A total of 184 soldiers, spouses of soldiers, and Army services personnel participated in the focus groups and interviews. The participants were from three Army installations: Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina; Fort McClellan in Anniston, Alabama; and Fort Ord in Monterey, California.

Table 1 below summarizes the distribution of subjects by group and location. As detailed in Table 1, 105 soldiers and spouses, 51 soldiers in leadership positions, and 28 Army family service providers were interviewed.

TABLE 1				
Number of Focus Group/Interview Participants By Site				
<u>Group</u>	<u>Fort</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Ord</u>	<u>McClellan</u>	<u>Jackson</u>	
Soldiers/Spouses	16	47	42	105
Leaders	3	25	23	51
BN Commanders	1	4	5	10
CSM/SGM	1	3	3	7
Company CO	0	10	6	16
First Sergeants	1	8	9	18
Service Providers	9	10	9	28
Total	28	82	74	184

At Forts Jackson and McClellan, interviews and focus groups were scheduled in advance. Participants were obtained through their units. At Fort Ord, interviews were scheduled after the arrival of the research team. Participants were obtained through their units and through direct contact with individuals who were asked if they would participate. Couples with children were offered compensation for child care expenses. All participation was voluntary.



The leadership group participants came from various levels of post and unit leadership. These groups included Battalion (BN) Commanders, Command Sergeant Majors (CSM) and Sergeant Majors (SGM), Company (CO) Commanders, and First Sergeants.

Army service providers were represented by staff members from several different types of family related programs. The participants included key personnel within the Family Support Division (FSD), such as the Directors of FSD and Army Community Service, the Army Emergency Relief Officer, and Community Life Officer; Social Work Services personnel; Chaplains; Housing staff; Military Police; and the Judge Advocate General.

#### Instrumentation

Instrumentation developed for this investigation was based on the key exploratory questions and reviews of the literature. Three discussion guides were developed; one each for soldier/spouse focus groups, leadership, and service providers.

The Soldier/Spouse Focus Group Guide. The Soldier/Spouse Focus Group guide was developed to address the following topics:

- Advantages and disadvantages of Army life
- Army and civilian life comparisons and contrasts
- Quality of Army life as a function of rank
- How families cope with the demands of Army life
- Social support networks (formal and informal)
- Characteristics of families the Army would like to retain

- Families' effect on retention and mission performance
- Army policies and practices that are supportive or detrimental to Army families
- Characteristics of supportive units/installations
- Post and Army-wide changes that would help families.

A copy of the Soldier/Spouse Focus Group interview guide is presented in Appendix A.

The Army Leadership Focus Group Guide. This guide was developed to address the following topics:

- Leadership involvement with family problems
- Types of families who come to leadership attention most often/least often
- Families' effect on retention and mission performance
- Types of families the Army would like to retain
- Unique expectations for families of leadership
- Army policies/programs that are supportive/detrimental to families
- Characteristics of supportive units/installations
- Information/changes to aid families and leadership working with families.

A copy of the focus group interview guide is presented in Appendix A.

The Family Support Network Interview Guide. This guide was developed for use in individual interviews with the Army service providers. The following topics were addressed:

- The service provider's role in relation to Army families

- Typical family problems encountered
- Types of families who come to their attention most often and least often
- Types of families the Army wants to retain
- Army policies and programs that are supportive or detrimental to families
- Characteristics of supportive units/installations
- Changes to aid families and service providers working with families.

A copy of the Family Support Network Interview Guide is presented in Appendix A.

#### Procedure

Two types of interview sessions were held. Each participant was interviewed either individually or in a focus group.

The interviews. Service providers were interviewed individually. Each interview was scheduled for one hour. During the interview, the service provider was asked to respond to questions from the Family Support Network Interview Guide, but was not required to answer. All interviews with service providers were held during duty hours.

The focus groups. Army leaders and soldiers/spouses participated in focus group settings. Leader focus groups were scheduled by rank and groups typically had two to five members.

Soldier/spouse groups were scheduled by the rank of the military member and typically consisted of five couples.

Focus groups with leaders were held during duty hours. Focus groups with soldiers and civilian spouses were held in the evenings to accommodate working spouses. Groups for dual-military couples and single parents were held during duty hours with their commander's permission.

Each focus group was scheduled for 90 minutes. Two research team members participated in each group, one facilitated discussion while the other took notes. Each group member was encouraged to participate; however, individuals were not required to answer any questions.

#### Method: Resource Checklist

##### Subjects

A total of 86 soldiers and spouses completed the resource checklist. Most of the participants (63 soldiers and spouses) were obtained from focus groups conducted at Ft. McClellan and Ft. Ord. An additional 23 spouse respondents stationed in Mannheim, West Germany were obtained in conjunction with focus group interviews on a related AFRP project. The 86 respondents consisted of 62 women and 24 men. The rank associated with the respondents ranged from E4 to O6; there were no respondents below pay grade E4.

### Instrumentation

Resources for Coping with Army Life (presented in Appendix B) is a one page, 24 item checklist, which lists resources that could aid Army families in coping with Army life. The list was developed as a result of focus groups discussions at Fort Jackson and literature review findings.

### Procedure

The checklist was administered at the conclusion of the focus groups in which the respondents were participating. The soldiers and spouses were instructed to select and rank-order five of the twenty-four resources, assigning a "1" to the "most important" resource thru "5" for the "least important" resource. They were asked to make their selections based on which resources were most important to help families adapt to Army life. Respondents typically completed the instrument in less than five minutes. All participants completed the instrument.

### Results: Focus Groups and Interviews

#### Family Perceptions of Army Life

Family perceptions of Army life are examined in terms of the perceived advantages and disadvantages, the comparison of Army life with civilian life, and the differences in the quality of life based on rank. These findings are drawn exclusively from soldier/spouse focus groups.

### Advantages and disadvantages of Army life

Focus group participants reported that they enjoy the rewards of military service but view those same rewards as having constraints and problems. The reported advantages and disadvantages of Army life are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
Advantages and Disadvantages of Army Life

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
Travel	Frequent relocations
Availability of housing and medical care	Quality of housing and medical care
Job security	Long hours and low pay
Career opportunity for member	Demands on family
Work with people	Separation from family

Travel and relocation. Although travel was perceived as a positive aspect of Army life, providing families with the opportunity to meet people and experience different cultures, all groups emphasized the negative aspects of frequent relocations. Many hardships were associated with relocation, including financial costs, negative effects on spouses' careers, disruption of family life and routines, and not being able to put down roots

in a community. Participants reported that they lose money every time they move, as a result of weight allowances, replacement of household items, and loss of home equity through selling costs. As one officer commented, "the drapes in one house never fit the windows in the next house, so every time you move, you start over". Spouses' potential earnings suffer because they are never in one job long enough, "they never get tenure", thus hampering job advancement. Some employers were reported to be reluctant to hire military spouses, because they know the spouses will have to move in a year or two. Family life is disrupted by having to leave friendships, churches, stores, and child care arrangements. One spouse stated "moves can be especially difficult for children" in establishing new friendships. A warrant officer's spouse commented the "community doesn't always want to get to know the military because [military families] are always moving."

Medical care and housing. Benefits such as medical care and housing were mentioned frequently as advantages of military life. At the same time, however, the quantity and quality of medical care and housing were seen as disadvantages. Medical facilities were described as "understaffed and overworked." Some participants complained of inadequate medical care for families, with the needs of family members always taking a backseat to the needs of soldiers. One group of participants stated that to receive adequate medical care, they sought it off post. The

quantity and quality of housing, particularly for junior enlisted families, was also viewed as a disadvantage in some groups. One senior enlisted soldier's spouse attributed the lack of privacy in the Army to living in on post quarters, which she described as "rabbit cages."

Job security versus long hours and low pay. Job security was seen as a primary benefit of military life, particularly for enlisted members. This advantage was offset by long hours and low pay reported by all rank levels. As a corollary to long work hours, a number of groups cited "a lack of family time" as a disadvantage.

Members' careers versus demands on family. Participants emphasized the challenge and rewards of a military career, stating that the Army teaches discipline, responsible, and provides good opportunities for advancement. Although military life was viewed positively as challenging and exciting, several aspects were also viewed as demanding for family members, particularly spouses. Participants in all groups agreed that Army life is difficult for spouses, and that there is a lack of institutional support for the independent needs of spouses. Relevant comments included:

Army life is "difficult for families and wives."



"Wives must sacrifice a great deal."

"A wife can throw away dreams of a career."

The military encourages women to accept jobs that are traditionally filled by women, e.g., teacher.

"It is extremely lonely for you if you don't force yourself to get out."

"My wife is bored being in the house."

Problems with spouse employment and the lack of spouse career opportunities were mentioned repeatedly by focus groups and discussed at length. Another major issue was the extent to which the social image and actions of the soldier's spouse and family were said to affect the soldier's career. Spouses were reportedly not viewed independently by the Army, but as extensions of the soldier and assuming the associated rank of the soldier. A number of participants felt that the Army with social and volunteer demands on spouses was out of step with the times. The participating soldiers generally felt that a military member's performance rating and career advancement shouldn't depend on what that member's spouse does or doesn't do.

#### Comparison with civilian life

In comparing military with civilian, participants cited the advantages and disadvantages discussed earlier. In addition, participants indicated that availability of a wide range of

services in the military community was better than in the civilian community. For example, some officer/spouse focus group participants commented:

"With today's job market, you don't always have the benefits the Army offers."

"Family services provided by the Army would not necessarily be provided by a civilian organization."

"Experts are at our fingertips to help find some of the answers in dealing with emergencies."

The camaraderie of the military community was viewed as an advantage of military life. Participants frequently used the phrase, "the Army takes care of its own." One officer's spouse stated that Army families receive "support from other military members because they know what you are going through even if they don't know you." Although the military community was viewed as being friendly and supportive, some officers' spouses described the quickly established friendships as shallow.

While respondents perceived greater job security in the Army than in civilian life, some group members said that the pay is lower for the number of hours worked. Civilian jobs were perceived as having more regular hours, since they would have to pay overtime for extended hours. Junior ranking enlisted single parents also viewed the civilian community as more understanding of single parent concerns. Single parents complained of the longer work hours in the Army, including 24 hour duty "which is difficult which children." As a solution to child care problems

encountered with all night duty, some single parents said they take their children in with them and let them sleep on post.

The unpredictability of military life was also compared to civilian life, with one noncommissioned officer (NCO) group participant stating "you don't know when you're going to get orders." An officer's spouse commented that a family cannot rely on the military member as much because when the soldier goes away unexpectedly, it is not known when he will return.

#### Rank and quality of life

All groups agreed that "rank has its privileges." Groups stated that the quality of Army life improves with rank, specifically concerning pay and the availability and quality of on post housing. Comments concerning available enlisted housing included, "enlisted housing is not fit for people to live in," and "enlisted housing looks like public housing." When housing is not available on post for junior ranking enlisted families, these families must "live off the [civilian] economy." The cost of living overseas for enlisted families was described as exceptionally difficult. According to one group, this financial struggle of E1 thru E5 soldiers and their families often affects marital relationships. Group members explained that soldiers must often send family members home from overseas because of living conditions and financial circumstances. Nevertheless, one officer/spouse focus group responded that even with the

financial difficulties junior ranking enlisted families encounter, "many soldiers would not have as good a life in the civilian world, even with the problems."

#### Effects of Army Policies, Programs, and Practices on Families

Army policies, programs, and practices have both positive and negative effects on families. Soldier and spouse focus groups reported considerable variation in the extent to which installations and visits were supportive of family concerns and described the characteristics associated with supportive installations/units. Supportive and innovative policies and programs for families were identified, as were policies and practices that impair family functioning. A number of suggestions were also made for improving Army family life.

#### Determinants of a supportive unit/installation

Command support. Participants most frequently cited the importance of the individual commander in determining if a unit or installation is supportive of families. Soldier/spouse focus group participants observed that command support for families frequently depended on whether "the commander is married or single." Relevant comments included:

"Leadership emphasis on the family must go all the way through the chain of command."

"It's really who you work for."

"[Caring for families] is learned and passed on to others through experience. Soldiers learn by watching their supervisors so that when they reach that level, they understand."

"All commanders will talk about motherhood and apple pie but if senior leadership really cares, it won't provide just lip service."

Supportive commanders were viewed as helping initiate family support groups and emphasizing commitment to and communication with families. A caring commander was described as one who keeps families informed, who "sends training schedules to spouses," and who "allows the soldier to go home to take care of his family if there is no work to do or a mission to perform." The presence of family activities, unit/post activities, family support groups, and a mayoral system in post housing areas were also identified as characteristics of a supportive unit/post. The groups emphasized the importance of the commander's interaction with, and concern for, these activities and programs in determining the post/unit's supportiveness of families.

Post and unit characteristics. All participants listed the characteristics of a unit or post as important determinants of supportiveness. Participants specifically mentioned:

Type of unit. Focus group participants believed that rapid deployment groups had more support than other groups, "especially in Europe" where soldiers spend more time in the field.

Geographic location and size of the installation.

Participants believed that the location and size of a post are important in determining family supportiveness. Smaller, isolated posts were described as more supportive because military families "banded together." At larger posts with larger civilian populations, "soldiers get lost in the woodwork." Families stationed overseas were described as being more supportive because they live within the same proximity and because of the "distance from family and friends."

Mission requirements of the installation (TRADOC vs.

FORSCOM). Participants felt that "some missions require more support." For example, those interviewed at one TRADOC post believed that leadership was more concerned with trainees than permanent party members and their families.

Supportive/innovative family programs practices

Focus group participants and service providers generally agreed that the Army offers many programs that support families, including:

- Family/spouse support groups
- Child care
- Army Community Service (ACS)
- Youth activities

- Army Emergency Relief (AER)
- Spouse orientations
- Red Cross
- Sponsorship program
- Recreational programs
- Family activities.

Family support groups were described as effective in getting information to spouses and in helping spouses establish informal relationships.

One program, described by a group of first sergeants as being particularly supportive, involved a physician's assistant travelling around post housing areas and administering health care to any family who placed a sign in the window indicating that the family needed medical assistance. The program was described as "keeping families out of the hospital and happy." Another program, the Respite Care Program, was described as "helpful for young wives who need child care to get out of the house for recreation." The program is designed so that Child Care Services will keep the children of junior ranking enlisted members free of charge for a given number of hours per month.

Service providers identified several additional programs as effective and innovative, including:

- Loan Closets
- Chaplain Programs

- Agency Referral Programs
- Family Member Employment Programs
- Mayors Programs for post housing areas
- Outreach programs.

One company commander commented, however, that "the Army provides the structure, but if the command is unaware [of family needs], the structure just stays there." Other group members noted that although picnics, orientations, and other unit functions supported families, their existence depended on the leadership of the unit.

Army policies, programs, and practices that impair family functioning

In interviews at all three sites, the following policies and practices were listed as detrimental to family functioning:

- Extended overseas tours and involuntary extensions
- Unaccompanied tours, especially for families "that are unstable to begin with"
- Frequent moves, including paperwork, weight allowances, the non-reimbursable costs, and the trauma associated with moving
- Recruiting practices that create false expectations due to advertising and promises made by recruiters
- Long work hours
- Quality of on post housing
- Quality of medical care
- Lack of confidentiality within support services (e.g Chaplains, ACS, etc.) on post



- Mandatory attendance at social functions
- Deployments/excessive alerts causing family separations.

Dual military couples also cited problems with a lack of flexibility in the Army's rules, simultaneous Temporary Duty (TDY) assignments, and the "punishment" of being married since military benefits are given to a family unit rather to each individual soldier.

An officer provided a larger context for the demands of Army family when he responded to question of Army practices which were detrimental to family functioning with the simple and succinct answer, "We go to war".

#### Suggestions for improving Army life for families

When asked for suggestions for improving Army life for families, respondents focused on basic quality of life issues:

- Housing
- Work day hours
- Pay
- Tour assignment policies
- Commissary hours
- Child care
- Medical care.

Participants emphasized improving both guest housing and family housing because both were described as "substandard." Others felt the Army should reimburse families for temporary or

short-term quarters. Participants stated that child care hours and commissary hours should be extended in consideration of soldier's and employed spouse's work schedules. A First Sergeant recommended that the Army examine assignments given to first termers, suggesting that the Army not "assign young soldiers on unaccompanied tours where they can't bring their families." Participants also recommended stabilizing tours, although "people who want to move should be able to move."

Army leaders suggested "reevaluating the length of training because long hours affect morale," and reducing hours if work is completed.

Pay was mentioned frequently, with respondents making the following comments:

"E4s on welfare is a crime; shame on the Army,"

"Soldiers don't get paid enough."

"We chose the Army for a lot of reasons, but when a person says 'I will put myself first to die for my country,' I should be compensated monetarily."

Participants recommended improving programs which provide needed information on available services. One service provider stressed the importance of orientations stating that "wives don't seem to know what's available." A warrant officer's spouse suggested establishing welcome wagons at installations to inform families of schools, shopping centers, and other needed services. Participants suggested improving the Sponsorship Program to

minimize families' apprehensions about moving. Respondents stated this could be accomplished by providing all service members with sponsors, monitoring the program to maintain its standards, and by "making sure information is readily available for families when they move."

Participants felt that there should be more honesty in the Army system to prevent false expectations. They also felt families should be recognized for their importance, particularly in volunteer work. One NCO's spouse commented that the Army "needs to recognize volunteers with a luncheon or individually by the agencies that they volunteer for rather than with impersonal parades."

Both service providers and Army leaders were asked to provide suggestions for improving their ability to perform their jobs, including requesting any additional information they might need to serve the community. Service providers requested background information on the families at their posts, including the number and ages of children in the military community, and the names and dates of those arriving. Service providers also wanted to know the needs of the families. One respondent commented "if we knew their needs, we could inform them."

Army leaders' recommendations included informing families of available services and of the military member's mission. Leaders made the following recommendations:

"Spouses should have to learn about the Army and its mission".

"The Army should allow commanders more independence in dealing with family problems".

"If the Army can't increase pay, it should give the soldier time to do his job and time to be with his family".

"The Army should provide problem prevention training to help commanders understand interpersonal relationships".

Participants also suggested improving child care, reducing the cost and number of mandatory social functions, and providing more predictability for families.

#### Family Adaptation to Army Life

In considering the overall question of family adaptation to Army life, focus group participants and service providers discussed the types of families the Army wants to retain, expectations for the families of Army leaders, the characteristics of families at risk for Army services, and the characteristics of adjusted families. Coping strategies and resources to help families adapt to Army life were also identified and described.

### Families the Army wants to retain

Participants from both leadership and soldier/spouse focus groups reported the Army wishes to retain ideal families, even though some participants felt there is "no one model," and "good Army families are all different." Most group participants described the ideal Army family as one that adheres to both Army values as well as values associated with "traditional" families; in essence, families that "walk the line." These families possess a "spirit of adventure" and willingness to give "selfless service," while also possessing "a good set of values." According to participants, the following characterize the ideal family:

- Supportive
- Mature
- Enjoys travel
- Good values/morals
- Volunteers to help the Army community
- Has an independent spouse who "can take care of everything when the soldier is gone."
- Committed
- Self-sufficient
- Adaptable
- No problems/complaints.

A First Sergeant commented that "the Army is looking for the ideal family that does not exist in the Army or in larger society."

Although participants generally agreed that the Army wishes to retain families, some participants maintained that the Army wishes or should wish to retain soldiers who perform well rather than families. Comments included:

"The Army shouldn't [seek to] keep families, it should [seek to] keep individuals".

"The Army is not interested in families, the Army wants good soldiers".

It was not that these participants considered families to be unimportant, only that they thought the emphasis in retention ought to be on the individual soldier.

#### Army's expectations for families of commanders

Army leaders agreed that the Army expects families of commanders to possess those characteristics mentioned above as well as the leadership qualities associated with the military member's position. The leaders said their spouses are expected to:

- Be supportive
- Serve as a role model for others
- Provide a family support network
- Be a counselor for other spouses
- Participate in installation and unit support activities because "there are unspoken requirements to attend social functions."

Leadership groups also expressed the belief that the spouse's role could affect the service member's career. Because

of the responsibilities associated with the position, "the Army wants spouses with no real career." Since many spouses work, however, some participants felt that the spouse's role has changed, prompting a First Sergeant to state that "today, wives are not shadows of the members' ranking position." For example, one group of participants perceived that attendance at social functions is not as critical as it use to be for the military member's career advancement. Additionally, leadership groups commented that not having a volunteering spouse would not necessarily affect the perception of an officer's performance, although having a volunteering spouse may affect promotion due to high visibility. Still, officers and senior NCOs expressed feeling pressure to marry in order to provide someone to fulfill this leadership role. One Sergeant Major commented that the "first three questions asked when interviewing for a job were: Are you married? Is your wife with you? and Does she work?"

#### Identification of families at risk

When asked to identify families at risk, leaders and service providers noted that "all families are unique," "there is no typical family or pattern," and "[family problems] can happen to anyone." Nevertheless, they reported that families experiencing the most difficulty adjusting to Army life, the families they were most likely to see, could be characterized as:

- Young, junior enlisted soldiers with families
- Families with financial and marital problems

- Families that lack experience and maturity to cope with their situation
- Newly married couples who were far away from family and other support systems
- Families that had just arrived on post.

Members in one group of Sergeant Majors attributed young families' problems to a lack of money, stating "a big problem is that they can't afford the Army." Referring to maturity, a service provider commented that couples have problems because they are "not able to cope with being an adult."

One First Sergeant suggested that family background was somewhat irrelevant to a family's adjustment to Army life. He said "you could have a soldier that comes from a well-to-do family that has a problem adjusting to the Army. You really can't say that it is a characteristic of a family that will make things happen ... it depends on how the soldier responds to discipline."

#### Identification of adjusted families

Service providers and Army leaders reported that adjusted families, the families Army personnel were less likely to see, had the opposite characteristics of families at risk. Service providers and Army leaders identified these families as:

- Families of officers (One service provider commented "I can count the number of officers I've seen on one hand.")
- Older, stable, mature families



One service provider stated that the reason so few officers were seen is because "it can affect their careers." Another service provider noted that "command is less likely to refer good soldiers," suggesting that command is reluctant to act on family problems that do not impair job performance.

#### Coping strategies and resources for Army families

Suggested coping strategies. When asked to advise new military families on coping with Army life, soldier/spouse focus group participants stressed becoming part of the community. Participants advised spouses to be independent, establish friendships, and get involved in family support groups. Specific advice included:

"Do not sit and brood, interact with other people and broaden your circle."

"Prepare for the military member's deployment by understanding the military system, and by knowing what to do before the military member is deployed."

"Know what will happen when the military member is away, knowing what resources are available and know how to use them."

"Have a contingency plan for everything because spouses need to manage the family during deployment."

"Learn about the Army by talking to other families who know how to deal with things."

Soldier/spouse focus groups also offered advice on how to adjust to Army life within the family. Specifically, families offered the following advice:

"Communicate, with the husband and wife leaning toward each other for support."

"Do not keep spouses in the dark about dependents' needs, benefits, power of attorney, identification cards, etc."

"Plan ahead by budgeting and saving money."

"Always have a sense of humor and be able to laugh because the situation will change eventually."

Both single parents and dual military couples offered specific advice for military members in similar situations. Single parents stressed: finding child care (especially for deployment); budgeting; and learning the demands of each Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) to determine how those demands could affect family life. Dual-career military couples suggested that new dual-career Army families select jobs in different branches of the Army to help ensure receiving assignments at the same post.

Coping resources used. When asked who they turn to when they have a problem, focus group members typically said parents and family members. Members of one junior enlisted focus group agreed that they "try to deal with [problems] within the family." Group members stated that people turned to leaders in the chain of command for help with specific problems. For example, one junior enlisted focus group participant said "the chain of command is helpful in intervening when the spouse cannot receive adequate medical attention because she is not a soldier." Nevertheless, group members pointed out that going to a leader for help could be viewed positively or negatively, depending on

the leader's point of view. Participants believed that problems could be viewed as flaws when leaders have the "perception you cannot handle the problem."

Members of one officer/spouse focus group emphasized the unique situation of officers with problems because "officers don't have problems." It is difficult for some officers to turn to the chain of command for help with a family problem; in part, because the officer thinks that just having the problem could negatively affect his or her career. Other participants reported that soldiers fear a breach of confidentiality as a result of confiding in Army Community Service (ACS) personnel and/or an Army chaplain. Thus, although groups frequently mentioned chaplains and ACS as sources of support, several focus groups reported that officers and NCOs, fearing a breach of confidentiality with on-post services, paid for those same services off post. One NCO's spouse commented, "heaven forbid your husband's unit find out you're having marital problems, financial [problems], forget it!"

Other sources of support listed included friends, neighbors, and co-workers, with group members emphasizing the closeness of those relationships as prerequisites for being considered as sources of support. For example, one officer/spouse focus group participant commented, "it takes time to develop trust in new friendships," and another group participant stressed that people can turn to co-workers with whom they share friendships. Both

AER and Red Cross were listed as sources of support; however, focus group participants stated that although they knew other families who used those services, the participants themselves had not used the services.

### Effects of Family Functioning on the Army's Mission

Army families can have both positive and negative effects of the Army's mission. Family problems frequently become problems for the unit to deal with, and families can either enhance or undermine a soldier's job performance. Finally, families directly affect a soldier's retention decision.

### Effects of family problems

Although Army personnel reported pro-active, preventive contact with families, most interaction concerned episodic family problems. All Army leaders reported some level of involvement in the family problems of members in their units, although it was generally agreed that first sergeants were usually the first in line to address family problems. A member's family problems then go up the chain of command or over to an Army service provider, depending on the nature and severity of the problem. Leadership focus group participants found it difficult to assess how much time is spent on family problems, since it varied, "you can go

for a while without any, and then you'll have a lot", and "when there's a lot [of family problems], it's 90 percent of your time."

Both leaders and service providers said they often encountered families with marital problems; spouse/child abuse problems; financial difficulties; and families experiencing problems with Army services, such as housing and medical care. According to the Army leaders and service providers interviewed, these problems could result from difficulties families face adjusting to the stresses of Army life. These stresses include long work hours and separations. The problems were also related to lack of communication between the service member and spouse.

Army leaders and service providers also reported that drug/alcohol, financial, and domestic problems were the most difficult problems to solve. Drug/alcohol abuse is an exceptionally difficult problem according to one company commander because the "legal influence of the commander is debatable, especially off-post." Marital problems involving infidelity were described by one service provider as difficult to resolve because "once the problem is recognized, the anxiety level associated with each separation becomes more severe." Service providers also listed non-support as being difficult to resolve because the military member and the spouse will tell differing versions of their situation; therefore "you don't know

what the truth is." Additionally, non-support problems are compounded when the soldier is stationed overseas because "distance is immunity."

One service provider noted that some problems tend to "piggy back" on other problems. One First Sergeant confirmed this stating that "problems were often tied together." For example, a family's financial problems could lead to marital problems which could lead to spouse abuse.

#### Positive effects of family factors on readiness

Army personnel and spouses interviewed at all three sites said families can positively and negatively affect mission accomplishment and job performance. A First Sergeant stated "any problem the family has is going to affect you on your job." Participants agreed that families primarily help the mission by being supportive of the soldier, stating that "when the member is happy with family life, he will come to work happy."

Supportive families were depicted as giving emotional and instrumental support to the soldier. Families provide emotional support by understanding the demands of the military and career progression. They provide instrumental support by functioning independently in the soldier's absence. One officer's spouse at Fort Ord said the "family makes it possible for Private Light Fighter to jump out of the plane."

Families help the soldiers' morale by understanding the job demands of the Army. Thus, families help mission accomplishment by accepting a perceived organizational value of the Army -- the Army comes first. An Officer stated, "for me, the Army comes first and she [his wife] comes second and she knows that." Families were also said to help the soldier by "having an interest in the unit" and by "accepting the military member's absence." Participants agreed that families provide emotional support to the soldier by providing companionship and stability, and "by making life at home as comfortable as possible."

Families can also motivate a soldier to perform well. One single parent said the family provides the soldier with an "extra push." A company commander said the presence of a family "provides a more stable, mature" soldier who is "less likely to take personal risks."

Group members noted that families help the mission by functioning independently and self-sufficiently. One respondent commented "needs met at home make it possible for the soldier to do his job." Participants agreed that families help the mission by taking responsibility and getting things done "during [Permanent Change of Station] moves when the member cannot get time off." This independence is important during deployments and on a day-to-day basis as well. A battalion commander commented "if a soldier is not confident in his family's ability to survive if he is deployed, it will affect his ability to do his job."

Another officer/spouse focus group participant stated the "soldier needs to be able to go off to work with confidence in the spouse." Participants linked independence with knowledge of the military system. For example, senior-ranking NCO/spouse focus group participants agreed that "spouses need to know the rules in order to function."

#### Negative effects of family factors on readiness

Group participants agreed that families can harm mission accomplishment by not supporting the soldier and failing to function independently. Families that do not understand the job demands of the Army or complain about Army life were said to worry soldiers, thus distracting them from their jobs, impairing their performance, and jeopardizing safety. Comments included:

"If you have family problems, your mind isn't on the job and the mission doesn't get accomplished."

"If the soldier is unhappy, he won't be productive or motivated."

Army leaders at two sites agreed that families can hamper the mission by being too dependent on the soldier. For example, participants stated families can remove a soldier from his (or her) job by failing to make dependent care arrangements. One respondent stressed that families hurt the mission if the spouse "can't handle separation and is constantly calling unit leadership and bothering the unit."



### Family factors and retention

Leaders agreed that families affect retention by encouraging or pressuring the soldier to leave the Army. Soldiers and their spouses confirmed this observation of Army leaders. One respondent voiced the spouse's attitude as "if I'm not happy, you're not happy [in the Army]." Soldiers and their spouses also noted that families can encourage the soldier to remain in the Army for the benefits (medical, etc.), job security, and quality of life for children.

### Results: The Resource Checklist

The resources checklist responses were coded to reflect both how frequently a resource was selected and how highly the resource was ranked. Rankings were reversed so that 5 = "most important" thru 1 = "least important." Using this procedure, when the rankings were summed the highest score would be associated with the respondent's most important resources. Each resource ranking was multiplied by the frequency of its occurrence to compute an overall score. Therefore, the scores reflect frequency and rank.

Table 3, on the next page, presents the coping resources with both numeric scores for the resource and rankings, by group. The reader is cautioned that Table 3 presents ordinal level data and should be interpreted accordingly.

TABLE 3

## Coping Resources For Adaptation To Army Life

(Score and ranks in parenthesis)

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Group</u>			
	<u>Officer</u>		<u>E4-E9</u>	
	Member	Spouse	Member	Spouse
H/W who work as a team	29(1)	75(2)	19(2)	71(1)
Good communication	28(2)	68(3)	15(4)	45(2)
Positive outlook	18(4)	77(1)	-	37(4)
Spouses who function independently when necessary	10(8)	46(4)	13(5)	-
Sensitivity of post leadership to families	14(5)	-	-	43(3)
Soldiers who make family #1	12(6)	-	-	-
H/W maturity	23(3)	26(6)	-	-
Spouses who support soldier	-	-	-	26(6)
Family flexibility and humor	-	33(5)	-	-
Spouses who understand mission	-	-	21(1)	-
Unit leadership supportive of families	-	-	16(3)	-
Availability of family services	11(7)	-	-	-
Strong religious foundation	-	-	-	31(5)

Although each resource has been ranked by group, the scores vary by only one point for several of the resources; therefore the relative importance is practically equivalent for some resources. For example, the number one and number two resources for officers varies by only one point (29 and 28, respectively).

In general, the groups responded quite similarly in the weight they put on a particular resource. "Husband/wife who work together as a team," was ranked either first or second for every group. The next three resources: "Good communication," "Positive outlook," and "Spouses who function independently when necessary," were important resources for at least three out of the four groups.

#### Officer members

Officers have the most resources listed because the fifth through the eighth ranked resources represent differences of only four points. Noteworthy findings for the officers include the importance of: "husband/wife maturity" (#3), "sensitivity of post leadership to families" (#5), "soldiers who make their family their number one priority" (#6), and "availability of family services" (#7). Officers were the only group to emphasize making the family the number one priority, and the importance of family services being readily available to those in need. Based on discussions with service providers and focus group participants, however, officers were reported as more likely to make family sacrifices for their work (especially after reaching

field grade rank) and less likely to use Army family services. A possible explanation of this apparent anomaly is that these officers were either thinking back on their family life, or were responding with their soldiers in mind, rather than their own families.

Along with their spouses, officers remarked on the importance of husband/wife maturity, a resource neither enlisted group ranked high enough to be listed. Additionally, officers placed relatively high importance on "sensitivity of post leadership to families." Perhaps from the leadership vantage point many of these officers held, they viewed their roles as leaders and those of similarly ranking officers as vital components in family adaptation to Army life.

#### Officer spouses

The top four resources as ranked by spouses of officers, are: (1) "positive outlook on life", (2) "husband/wife who work as a team", (3) "good communication between spouses", and (4) "spouses who function independently when necessary". The first three resources all refer to an internal family structure that supports the entire family unit. The fourth resource, which was also ranked highly by officers and enlisted members, refers to the spouse being capable of handling family matters without assistance from the military member if necessary.

The fifth and sixth resources listed under officer spouses refer to the importance of flexibility and humor combined with a high level of maturity. These resources referred to "being able to roll with the punches", while at the same time dealing with situations in an adult and rational manner.

#### Enlisted members

Highest ranking for enlisted members was "spouses who understand the mission." In fact, they were the only group to place any level of importance on this resource at all. Enlisted members also responded uniquely on the resource they ranked third: "Unit leadership being supportive of families." Possibly because all the enlisted members in this sample were at least of the E-4 pay grade, they were more likely to find themselves playing a leadership role at the unit level. Similarly to officers and their spouses, enlisted members placed relatively high importance on "spouses who function independently."

#### Enlisted spouses

Responses from enlisted spouses were generally similar to those from other groups. Their highest ranked resources related to family teamwork, communication and a positive outlook. Enlisted spouses did have unique responses on two resources: "Strong religious foundation" (#5) and "Spouses who support the soldier" (#6). Spouses of enlisted members were the only group that ranked "strong religious foundation" anywhere near the top. These respondents may believe that beginning with a strong faith

is a coping resource that can be drawn upon in many difficult situations. The resource ranked sixth, "spouses who support the soldier," points to the relative importance enlisted spouses placed on their ability to be supportive and encouraging to the military member. This resource may also be considered similar to "spouses who function independent when necessary" which was not highly ranked by enlisted spouses but was given relative importance by the other groups.

#### Discussion: Focus Groups and Interviews

The information obtained during these exploratory site visits indicated:

- Families are most concerned about aspects of Army life that affect their ability to function on a day-to-day basis (i.e. medical care, housing, child care, work hours, moves, and separations).
- The mere presence of family programs and activities does not ensure a sense of supportiveness for Army families; leadership must demonstrate their interest and concern for families.
- Families use informal support networks to cope with Army life, especially during separation. Families also use effective communication as a family coping resource.
- The Army wants to retain families that adjust well to Army life.
- Family adaptation can directly affect readiness and retention.

The focus groups participants indicated that Army families enjoy both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of military service but view those same rewards as problems and constraints of the

life. For example, Army families value the opportunity to travel and the availability of services, but dislike the problems associated with frequent moves and the quality of services, such as medical care and housing.

Families reported that they cope with the demands of Army life by becoming part of the community, and by functioning independently from the military member. Those soldiers and their spouses interviewed also look for support within their own families. Seeking support outside the family was viewed with caution because participants believed that disclosures of family problems could negatively affect the military member's career.

Families and Army leaders agreed that these coping behaviors are characteristics of families the Army wishes to retain. According to those interviewed, the Army wishes to retain involved, committed families who have no problems or complaints. The characteristics used to describe the ideal Army family sound like the mythical image of families from the 1950s. The Army is however faced with the reality of meeting the needs of families in the 1980s and beyond. Spouses are more independent and less likely to see themselves as an extension of the military member. Neither soldiers or spouses think the actions of the spouse should affect the member's career, although many think that it still does. The Army's treatment of spouses was an issue raised in almost every soldier/spouse focus group.

Army families frequently mentioned the command as important in determining if a unit or installation was supportive. Supportive commanders were viewed as helping initiate family support groups, and emphasizing commitment and communication. Groups representing all participants also listed demographic characteristics of the unit and post as also being important in determining supportiveness, with participants specifically mentioning type of unit and the size, geographic location, and mission requirements of the installation (TRADOC vs. FORSCOM).

Focus group participants interviewed provided somewhat mixed messages in the areas of family support services and family activities and social events. On the one hand, participants thought Army services and programs to support families were useful and important. On the other hand, participants felt constrained from actually using services because of breaches in confidentiality and adverse effects on the soldier's career. Many of the programs participants thought were most helpful and supportive of families had never actually been used by them. Similarly, focus group participants thought that installation and unit sponsored activities and events for families indicated supportiveness for families. At the same time, many participants complained about the social demands made by the Army, mandatory attendance at such events, and the cost of mandatory functions. It is not clear what accounts for these apparent contradictions. It is possible that participants were using Army families in



general, or Army families other than themselves, as the referent point for some of their responses.

When asked to provide suggestions for improving Army life for families, respondents focused primarily on those aspects of Army life which affect them on a day-to-day basis. Specifically, participants suggested improving basic services, such as housing, commissary hours, tour assignment policies, workday hours, child care, medical care, and pay, as well as services providing needed information, such as the Sponsorship program and orientations designed to inform families of available services.

Army personnel and spouses interviewed at all three sites agreed that families both can positively and negatively affect mission accomplishment and job performance, by either supporting or not supporting the soldier and the Army's mission. Families support the soldier by understanding the demands of the military and career progression, and by functioning independently in the soldier's absence. Conversely, group participants agreed that families do not support the soldier by complaining and by failing to function independently. Family problems were reported to remove not only the soldier from his job, but also to take the time of his superiors. Army leaders agreed that families affect retention by encouraging or pressuring the soldier to leave the Army.

### Discussion: The Resource Checklist

Although this sample is not representative of the Army population, and generalizations should be made with great care, some interesting findings were obtained. All groups placed relatively high importance on the husband and wife working together to aid in adaptation to the Army. Whether this was expressed through good communication, teamwork, maturity, making the family the number one priority, or maintaining a positive outlook on life, the Army families interviewed believe they must work together to adapt successfully to the demands of the military lifestyle.

Spouses play an important role as the supporter of the soldier, and at times the sole caretaker of the family. Every group emphasized this point by the importance assigned to spouses who function independently when necessary, support the soldier, or understand the mission. The military members and spouses interviewed generally consider the role of the spouse to be a critical components of overall adaptation to the military.

Every group, except spouses of officers, gave relatively high importance to Army leaders as key players in aiding families in their adaptation process. Whether at the unit or post level, supportive leaders appear to be a vital resource for families adapting successfully to military life.

In summary, soldiers and spouses at three different locations have identified three resources as very important in helping families to adapt to the demands of Army life. These are:

- Couples working together and as a family
- Spouses being supportive of the military member
- Leadership being supportive of families.

These three components appear to be vital to the daily process of family adaptation to Army demands.

### Conclusions

#### Limitations of Research Design

The findings from this study are exploratory and should be interpreted with caution. The participants were not selected to be representative of the entire Army community, therefore generalizing these findings to all soldiers, spouses, service providers, ranks, and genders is not appropriate.

A strength of this investigation was the use of open-ended questions in an informal focus group atmosphere. This format was used to provide in-depth qualitative data and to explore family issues. Additionally, interviewing service providers individually provided an opportunity to obtain qualitative information that may not have been obtained using other techniques.

### Future Research

The results obtained from the exploratory focus group discussions and interviews were useful in reinforcing the value of research planned under the Army Family Research Program (FRP) and in targeting specific areas for research related to family adaptation to the Army.

This investigation provided qualitative evidence for the relationships between family factors and readiness and between family factors and retention. Research to establish empirical linkages between family factors and readiness and retention is being conducted under separate research areas within the AFRP and will be completed by December 1991.

Results from this exploratory investigation also focused attention on the unique demands Army families face and must learn to cope with to foster family adaptation to Army life. Key among these demands is frequent relocations and separations. Additional research in these areas would be useful in understanding the impact of relocation and separation on Army families, in identifying the types of coping resources used by families, and in determining how the Army could mitigate the stresses of relocation and separation through changes in Army policies, practices or programs.

More than 200 soldiers, spouses of soldiers, and service providers gave their time, talents, and insights to help us better understand Army life for families. We have learned that

benefits bring hassles, inconveniences, and enduring problems, in short: silver linings have dark clouds. We have learned that spouses trade off many of the "working right" taken for granted by civilians. We have learned that family members look to each other for sources of support in meeting the daily challenges posed by the Army life-style. And we have learned that soldiers and their families see leaders as the creators of the Army experience which can be either helpful or harmful to families. It is important that the Army Family Research Program address the environment for Army families and the Army factors which affect family well-being as well as the family factors which affect the Army's mission readiness.

Appendix A  
Data Collection Instruments

**SOLDIER/SPOUSE FOCUS GROUP  
INTRODUCTION**

First, I'd like to introduce ourselves. I'm' \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ and this is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_. We are working for the Army Research Institute on a major five year study of Army families and how family factors relate to retention and readiness. Our specific focus this week is on strong Army families and how to develop and support Army family strength. We are also looking at spouse employment issues.

During this week at Ft. Jackson, we are meeting with Army couples and representatives from various commands as well as with service providers on post. Later, we'll be visiting Ft. McClellan and Ft. Ord.

What we'd like to do in this meeting is talk with you about how families affect the command, about the kinds of families the Army wants, and what the Army does or could do to support strong families.

I want to assure you that this entire discussion is confidential. Information is for research purposes only. Nothing anyone says will be attributed to anyone personally or repeated to anyone on post. We expect all of you to honor this confidentiality as well. We will use the information we get from this meeting and others primarily to help plan our future research.

We want you to know how much we personally appreciate your coming to this meeting. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have about why we're here or what we're doing.

**THE ARMY FAMILY RESEARCH PROGRAM  
FAMILY STRENGTH/WELLNESS RESEARCH TASK  
SOLDIER/SPOUSE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. If you had a friend or a relative who was considering a career in the Army, what would you tell that person about what life is like for Army families?

What are the positives?

What are the negatives?

2. Compared to civilians, in what ways is the Army better or worse for family life?

Better

Worse

3. Is the quality of family life in the Army different depending on rank? In what ways?
4. What kinds of advice would you give to a new Army family on coping with the demands of Army life?
5. When people have personal or family-related problems (have problems coping), who are the types of people or groups they are likely to turn to?

What types of problems are different people/groups most helpful for?



6. Could you describe the kinds of families the Army most wants to keep? For example, their attitudes? Behaviors?

7. What do families do that helps get the mission accomplished?

What do they do that makes it harder to accomplish the mission?

In what ways do family issues affect retention?

8. What does the Army do (e.g. policies, practices, programs) to promote and support strong families?

What are some of the things that the Army does which make it tough on families?

9. Some installations and units have a reputation for being more supportive of their families. Have you seen such units and installations in operation?

What did they do that was different?

10. What could the Army do (what additional changes should the Army make), either at this post or Army-wide, to help Army families adjust better to Army life?

Post:

Army-wide:

**ARMY LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUP  
INTRODUCTION**

First, I'd like to introduce ourselves. I'm' \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ and this is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_. We are working for the Army Research Institute on a major five year study of Army families and how family factors relate to retention and readiness. Our specific focus this week is on strong Army families and how to develop and support Army family strength. We are also looking at spouse employment issues.

During this week at Ft. Jackson, we are meeting with Army couples and representatives from various commands as well as with service providers on post. Later, we'll be visiting Ft. McClellan and Ft. Ord.

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I want to assure you that this entire discussion is confidential. Information is for research purposes only. Nothing anyone says will be attributed to anyone personally or repeated to anyone on post. We expect all of you to honor this confidentiality as well. We will use the information we get from this meeting and others primarily to help plan our future research.

We want you to know how much we personally appreciate your coming to this meeting. We'll be happy to answer any questions you may have about why we're here or what we're doing.

**ARMY LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUPS  
INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. In what ways do you get involved with family issues or problems of the service members in your unit? What types of family issues/problems do you see most often? Which are the most difficult to resolve?
  
2. Could you estimate approximately what percentage of your time is spent on these issues/problems?
  
3. What are the types/characteristics of families who come to your attention most often?

What are the types/characteristics of families whom you are least likely to see?

4. What do families do that helps get the mission accomplished?

What do they do that makes it harder to accomplish the mission?

In what ways do family issues affect retention?

5. Could you describe the kinds of families the Army most wants to keep? For example, their attitudes? Behaviors?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What does the Army want from (what kinds of expectations does the Army have for) the families of commanders (senior enlisted)? For example, their behaviors, attitudes?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does the Army do (e.g. policies, practices, programs) to promote and support strong families?

What are some of the things that the Army does which make it tough on families?

8. Some installations and units have a reputation for being more supportive of their families. Have you seen such units or posts in operation?

What did they do that was different?

9. What could the Army do (what additional changes should the Army make), either at this post or Army-wide, to help Army families adjust better to Army life?

Post:

Army-wide:

10. What could the Army do to make your job easier in working with Army families?

**THE ARMY FAMILY RESEARCH PROGRAM  
FAMILY STRENGTH/WELLNESS RESEARCH TASK  
FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK INTERVIEW GUIDE**

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Site: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Support Network Representative(s):

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1. How does your job bring you into contact with Army families and their concerns?

2. What are the types/characteristics of families who come to your attention most often?

What are the types/characteristics of families whom you are least likely to see?

3. What are the types/characteristics of families who have the most difficulty adjusting to Army life?

What types of family concerns/problems do you see most often?

Which are the most difficult to resolve?

4. What kinds of families does the Army most want to keep?

What do these families do (behaviors) that makes them desirable? For example, their attitudes? Behaviors?



5. Some installations and units have a reputation for being more supportive of their families. Have you seen such units and installations in operation?

What did they do that was different?

6. Are you familiar with any Army family programs which you feel are particularly innovative or unusual? If so, how can we get additional information about it?

7. What could the Army do (what additional changes should the Army make), either at this post or Army-wide, to help Army families adjust better to Army life?

Post:

Army-wide:

8. What is one thing that you would like to know about families here at Ft. McClellan that would help you in your job? Is there anything else?

9. What could the Army do to make your job easier in working with Army families?

10. What does the Army do (e.g., policies, programs) to promote and support strong families?

Are there things that the Army does that make things tough on Army families?

Appendix B  
Resource Checklist

**RESOURCES FOR COPING WITH ARMY LIFE:  
A GAME OF STRATEGY**

All families experience demands on their time and energy. These demands come from a variety of sources: family, job, friends, and community associations. In addition, life in the Army presents its own set of demands, including family separations, PCS moves, and often long duty hours.

The ability of a family to successfully handle these demands often depends on a combination of resources, including: (1) the values, capabilities and resources of its members, (2) the overall strength of the family itself, (3) the nature and level of informal support available to it from those outside the family, and (4) the type and supportiveness of Army policies, practices and programs at both the installation and the unit level. Overall, the nature and level of these capabilities, resources, and supports often make the difference between families who adapt successfully to Army life and those who do not successfully adapt.

Below is a list of 24 resources that may be available to a soldier and his/her family. Please select the five resources from this list that you think are most important to helping a family adjust successfully to life in the Army. After selecting the top five resources, please rank them according to their overall importance, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

INSTRUCTIONS: PLEASE SELECT AND RANK ORDER FIVE RESOURCES FROM THE LIST BELOW THAT YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO HELPING FAMILIES ADJUST SUCCESSFULLY TO LIFE IN THE ARMY.

(1 = Most Important; 5 = Least Important)

RESOURCES	RANK	RESOURCES	RANK
A positive outlook on life	_____	Husband and wife maturity	_____
Willingness to turn to others in time of need	_____	Unit leadership is supportive of family life	_____
Husband and wife who work together as a team	_____	Ability of family to live financially within means	_____
Family commitment to the mission and lifestyle of the U.S. Army	_____	Sensitivity of post leadership to families and family problems	_____
Availability of close friends for support	_____	Time and experience in the Army	_____
Family participation in unit/community sponsored events and activities	_____	Availability of quality family services and support at the installation level	_____
Good communication between spouses	_____	Spouse employment opportunities	_____
Cohesive unit where soldiers and their spouses pull for and help each other	_____	Spouses who function independently when necessary	_____
Spouses who understand what the soldier and his/her unit does	_____	Ability of the family to be flexible and to maintain their sense of humor	_____
Families who "ACT ON" instead of "REACT TO" life	_____	Ability/quality of post housing	_____
Spouses who support the soldier in meeting the demands of his/her job	_____	Soldiers who make their job the number 1 priority	_____
Soldiers who make their family the number 1 priority	_____	Strong religious foundation	_____

PLEASE TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF:

Male _____	Member _____	Rank _____
Female _____	Spouse _____	Age _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!